

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 49 *Jesuit Higher Education in a Global Context*

Article 12

February 2016

Great Steps Forward Through Education: From the Congo: Learning a New Language, New Customs: Great Challenge, No Barrier

Prisca Tshibambe

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Recommended Citation

Tshibambe, Prisca (2016) "Great Steps Forward Through Education: From the Congo: Learning a New Language, New Customs: Great Challenge, No Barrier," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 49, Article 12.
Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol49/iss1/12>

renewable work permit but were still ineligible for federal loans. Shortly after the creation of the DACA program, Loyola University Chicago's Stritch School of Medicine became the first medical school in the country to openly declare such students eligible to apply. Furthermore, the school partnered with the Illinois Finance Authority (IFA) to create a loan program to help DACA students finance their education. Under the program, physicians who practice for several years in underserved areas in the State of Illinois after completion of their training will have the interest on their IFA loans forgiven.

A little over a year has passed since I was accepted to Stritch. Having completed my first year of medical school and already begun my second, I can say with confidence that I'm growing into the physician I want to become not only because of Loyola's commitment to social justice but also owing to the great education I'm receiving here. During the rigorous process of medical training, students oftentimes become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information they have to learn and lose track of the idealism of serving others. I found that here at Loyola, that is not the case. The university does a great job at keeping its students grounded and places great emphasis on ensuring that students learn not only the scientific components of medicine but its humanistic aspect as well. I came to

Loyola because the Jesuits' belief in social justice, compassion, and service are values I share deeply and strive to live out in my personal life. I wanted to be reminded of them daily in my professional formation.

In my experience as a DACA student here at Stritch, not once have there been any unfortunate incidents or unpleasant comments regarding my immigration status. On the contrary, my classmates, along with the institution, have given me an incredible amount of support throughout my educational journey thus far. I'm blessed and grateful for the many opportunities I've received at Loyola. I know that "much is required from those to whom much is given." Thus, I have been awarded an Albert Schweitzer Fellowship that is enabling me to work to implement a pipeline program aimed at helping community college students become healthcare professionals. As expected, I have Loyola's full support.

As for the future, I plan to become a surgeon and practice medicine both here in the U.S. and abroad. I want to bring medical relief to areas beyond the boundaries set by politics, insurance plans, and personal interest, living a life of service dedicated to the "least of these," wherever they're found.

Pablo da Silva is a second-year medical student at Stritch School of Medicine at Loyola University, Chicago. He can be reached at pdasilva1@luc.edu.

From the Congo: Learning a New Language, New Customs *Great Challenge, No Barrier*

By Prisca Tshibambe

Three years ago, I left my home nation of the Democratic Republic of Congo to pursue a bachelor's degree in business administration. I was 18 years old, I spoke no English, and I had no family in the United States. I came to the United States to receive more than a better education. I came to find a better life. Arriving in the United States presented an exciting but daunting opportunity. An American education meant learning to speak, read, and write English. The challenge taught me much about persistence, hard work, and adaptability.

A Jesuit education was a tradition in the Catholic family into which I was born. Both my father and grandfather attended Jesuit schools, and it was an honor for my parents to perpetuate this tradition through me. At first, a Jesuit education meant nothing more to me than any other education. During my three and a half years in college, I learned a lot about the Jesuits and their accomplishments in the world, but it was only after attending a campus ministry retreat that a Jesuit education started to

mean a lot to me. I received not only an intellectual but also a spiritual education, which is not something a lot of graduates can brag about in today's world.

While I made a lot of progress with my English, I had not adapted yet. I became very quiet, shy, and unconfident. I was afraid that the students and the teachers would not be able to understand my English or, worse, would make fun of me. I started to withdraw and talked less. During my first semester, I did not actively participate in my classes for fear of embarrassment. Back home, you are expected to speak French perfectly, and when you mispronounce a word or use the wrong article everyone laughs at you. But in Wheeling it was different. I had supportive friends who would teach me to pronounce some words. In French the H is silent at the beginning of the word while the H is pronounced in English. It took me two years of practice and a patient friend to master this skill.

I also had to learn new social customs: back home, we kiss twice on the cheeks to greet friends, and we give a handshake to our elders. In the U.S.A., we hug among

Student Experiences

friends, we just say “hello” to acquaintances, and we shake hands with authorities. It took me about two months to understand the U.S. greeting system.

Food was one of the most difficult changes. Back home, we have spicy foods and we do not mix sugary and salty in a dish. After trying many dishes here I became a fan of gumbo, a dish that originated in Southern Louisiana.

I learned a lot about American culture, including country music (West Virginia’s “anthem,” John Denver’s “Take Me Home, Country Roads,” is my favorite country song).

Respect is very important in my country. Although some students were very respectful toward authorities, many were not, which was very challenging for me. After I thought about it for a while, I found out that in the U.S. there is no severe pun-

ishment for being disrespectful while in the Congo there was a large range of punishment for this, which created fear and obliged everyone to be respectful especially toward our elders.

Though my experience at Wheeling Jesuit University had ups and downs, overall it was extraordinary. My teachers have been very supportive and tried to accommodate my needs to the best of their abilities. The person-

al relation between students and faculty was the key to my education success. I plan to continue my education to be a woman for others as I now move on to law school.

Prisca Tshibambe, from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, graduated in business administration from Wheeling Jesuit University in May 2015.

LOYOLA’S NEW ARRUPPE COLLEGE OPENS

On September 25, Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago blessed Arrupe College. Mayor Rahm Emanuel, administrators, Arrupe students and family members and friends attended the ceremony. Arrupe College is Loyola University Chicago’s new two-year associate-degree school for students with limited financial resources. Stephen Katsouros, S.J., dean and executive director of the college, said, “We want our students at Arrupe College to fall in love with the idea of being college students, of being academically successful in a rigorous Jesuit college environment. We want them to fall in love with the idea that they can do this, that they can be successful at the corner of Pearson and State – and beyond.”



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